

This happens to be my priority bill, LB 752. This bill incorporates two concepts which resulted from two interim studies, LR 100, my 1993 interim study of mental health services, and LR 405, the 1992 study of mental health services. The bills were introduced last year and they were advanced to General File, but time ran out before they were placed on the agenda. First of all, LB 752 creates the Rehabilitation and Support Mental Health Services Incentive Act, which directs the Department of Social Services and Department of Public Institutions to apply for and implement the federal Medicaid rehabilitation option. A simple definition of rehabilitation option is middle intensity community-based services for persons with severe, persistent and disabling mental illnesses. This definition incorporates several ideas which I'd like to explain one at a time. The first is mental illness. Some examples of mental illness targeted by this bill is schizophrenia, bipolar, otherwise known as manic depressive, and acute depression, to name a few. These are diseases caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. People with mental retardation, substance abuse and brain trauma are not included. Each mental impairment requires somewhat specialized services. The second concept is persons. Individuals with mental illnesses are persons first. They are citizens of Nebraska and the United States, they are people who happen to have a disability. The third concept is severity. Severe mental disorders are those that have debilitating effects. The symptoms of severe disorders can greatly impair an individual's ability to function well in all spheres of daily living. Persistence is the fourth concept. It means for some that the illness and some of the resultant disabilities remain a constant in an individual's life. Intervention and treatments help, but they do not completely eliminate all the symptoms and resultant problems. While there may be an improvement, a persistent disorder is not likely to completely remit...or is likely to remit only after an extended period of time. The fifth and perhaps the most important concept is that of disability. Disability means an impairment of limitation that affects a persons' ability to function independently, appropriately and effectively. Therefore the target population for this act includes persons whose mental illness substantially impairs their ability to function independently in society over an extended period of time. The Medicaid rehab option is a way of obtaining a federal match of 60 cents for every 40 cents that Nebraska spends on community-based rehabilitation services for the people I have just described. It is not the intention of this bill that this